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Lowrie, John C.

WESTERN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

AND

FOREIGN MISSIONS.

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A Paper read at the Meeting of the Alumni, North Presbyterian Church, Alleghany, Pa., April 19, 1877,

By JOHN C. LOWRIE.

THE service assigned to me for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Western Theological Seminary, is "to deliver an address noting its zeal and influence in Foreign Missions, and the work of its alumni in the cause." There are two parts of this wide theme, you will perceive, but they both belong to the one subject of the place occupied by this Seminary in Foreign Missions. To understand this place rightly, we must go back to the beginning of the missionary and seminary movement in this part of the Church; trace its progress, and consider its benign results. To do justice to so large a subject in a few minutes is of course impossible, while yet some practical views of it admit of brief statement. Apart from the difficulty of doing justice to so large a theme, I find the embarrassment of following in the footsteps of the beloved brethren, Drs. Brownson and Elliot Swift, whose admirable papers in the *Memorial Volume* have pre-occupied the ground. They were the fresh and vigorous reapers; I can only be a gleaner. And yet a gleaner may hope to gather up golden grain that might otherwise be lost.

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I. I would first ask your attention to the common origin of this Seminary and of our work of Foreign Missions as organized under the direction of the Church. We may reverently trace its high origin to the forerunning grace of God, foreordaining the existence of both from eternity; but we may also speak of its origin in the means employed, the labors, self-denials, prayers, and faith of the men that laid the foundations of our Western Pennsylvania Church. It is to the piety of our Christian people, in what was then this frontier country, that we owe numberless blessings, and among them this Theological School and a large part of our Foreign Missionary Work. Their religious views combined in a remarkable degree the high doctrines of divine sovereignty in grace with a deeply inner experience of their power. Those whose privilege it is to remember the preaching of the earlier ministers of this region will agree with me in saying that we hardly ever heard a sermon that was not doctrinal in its whole tenor, based on the exposition of Scripture, and that was not at the same time discriminating, searching, and practical in its lessons of Christian experience. Of course there were great differences amongst them in their gifts, but I refer to their common faith and practice as preachers of the Word. This preaching was earnest. These first preachers were men in earnest—missionary men—and yet men who prized the blessings of sacred learning. Such ministers were McMillan, Tait, Hughes, Macurdy, McPherrin and others of the earlier generation of Western Pennsylvania preachers. I need not specify also the names of Herron, Brown, Jennings, Swift, and many others, who have entered into rest, but who can never be forgotten. The venerable name of Dr. Swift will here come into the thoughts of us all. He was not only the founder of our Church work in foreign missions, but he was the first instructor in theology in this Seminary. So of Dr. Herron, one of the noblest of men, closely connected with both the Seminary and the Missionary Committee. The character and services of these men have been well described in the *Memorial Volume*, and in the *Minutes of the Synod of Pittsburgh* from 1802 to 1832, books which ought to be found in every church library in the bounds of the old Synod.

These works show the large place occupied by this theological school and by our foreign missionary work in the thoughts and sympathies of our people. They show their earnest piety developed actively in domestic and foreign missions. The Indian missionary work was then as it is still in its nature essentially foreign work, and I think this Synod may fairly claim the credit of having entered on this work years before the movement took place, which resulted in the organization of the American Board. Here was its Board of Trust, or Administrative Committee; its missionary periodical; its regular collections; its missionaries in the field. If these missions were not as encouraging as was expected, it may be ascribed partly to an error in their plans, that of trying to conduct this Indian foreign work in a method better adapted to domestic than to foreign missions,—that of the temporary employment of ministers as missionaries rather than appointing them to a work for life. But the principle of action was right and wise,—alike honoring to God and benevolent to men, combining the united strength of numbers, and securing the supervision of the Church,—the only permanent living organization in this world,—so that we do not wonder when we see the missionary piety of our people founding schools, colleges, and this Theological Seminary, and then sending forth the well-qualified laborers to their work. Well may we rejoice that our Seminary and so largely our foreign missions were born of such parentage.

Their common origin carries our thoughts to the meetings of the Synod over in the neighboring city, and there too we find the home of both for some years, in their administration. It was the humble but pleasant little room in the rear of the First Presbyterian Church, known as its Session-Room—a room slightly irregular in form, and about half the size of the Session-Room now in the same place. There the first Seminary recitations were heard, and there did the Executive Committee of the Western Foreign Missionary Society "meet statedly on the first Monday of each month, at 2 o'clock, P. M,"—agreeably to a Minute in the hand-writing of Dr. Swift. Some of us well remember that little room. Its windows looked out on graves, white under the

snow of winter, green with the grass of summer, reminding us of our own mortality, yet in many cases speaking to us of the hope of immortality as a blessed hope to be cherished by us and to be published among all nations.

We may not pass from our tribute to the missionary piety which founded these institutions, without noting the generous spirit which led to the transfer of the foreign work to the General Assembly, as a like transfer had been made a few years before to the Assembly's Domestic Board of the Synod's home work. This change must have caused regret, and even solicitude, to the friends of foreign missions here, as the times then were passing; but their faith stood the test nobly; indeed they were filled with gratitude at seeing their principles and their work accredited by their brethren in other parts of the country, and their hearts would have glowed with new thanksgiving if they could have seen the sight which our eyes witness of the whole Church endorsing and adopting their principles and measures. We all now stand together in our faith that the Church is a missionary society, whose members are all our Christian people. If we have not yet all reached this ideal standard, we are pressing towards it; and so we may feel assured that the blessing of our Saviour's presence will be with us in times to come as in times past. And yet times change; it is not easy to look out on the Christian world of these days without feelings of anxiety as to many great interests. But if in our Seminary and our Missionary concerns we should be called to witness any falling away from the old foundations; if we should see our foreign missionary work regarded as not ordained church work, conducted in a broad-church policy or in sensational methods, or administered for the benefit of men not disinterested in their motives, whether missionaries or executive officers, then I trust the sons of this old Synod will rise up in the stead of their fathers and place this work where it stood here forty years ago. It is the old sacred work of the apostles and martyrs, and the new holy work of every age, until it is finished and our Lord shall reign from the river to the ends of the earth. Now, as I understand the case, this reference to the founders and supporters of this

Seminary will set forth its "zeal and influence in Foreign Missions." You see the men. You know what their work must be. You see the spring of their action, and you can judge of its movement, and can understand how this cause was always held in honor here. You would feel disappointed indeed, if you saw none of the students going forth to labor in the foreign field.

This brief statement enables us to understand also one of the good effects of the connection between these two great interests—the home results of the case. The going out as missionaries of some of the students has been of great benefit to the churches. Some there are, indeed, who ask, "To what purpose is this waste?" They see a choice young man, or a young woman of culture and loveliness, going to live and labor among ignorant and debased people in Africa or among the Laos, and they think these lives are thrown away. We stop not to argue the case, only asking in return, Did not our Saviour come down to live and labor and die for sinful and guilty men, in his sight all repulsive and degraded? But suppose these missionaries had never gone abroad, suppose these familiar names of Lodiana, Corisco, and Petchaburi had never been heard of by our Christian people, our convictions of benevolent duty would have lacked an element of power and sacred emotion. Suppose that our brethren had not been put to death in the rebellion of the Sepoys, our Christian sympathies would have been less tender and Christ-like,—our sense of the Saviour's presence and grace would have been less impassioned and complete, and the fullness of his blessing would not have been poured out upon our churches.

II. Passing these and other views, let us now look at the missionaries and their work. Here we may note some statistics. The whole number of missionaries sent from this Seminary to foreign missions is fifty-eight, not counting two or three who went to Texas before its admission to the Union, where the work was then, as it is now, essentially in the line of Domestic Missions. But this number includes those who went to the Indians, as missionary work for them, if rightly conducted,

is substantially the same as work in Africa or China. Of these fifty-eight brethren, nearly one-third have been led by various causes to return to this country. Twelve have been removed by death, to whose memory we will return further on; but keeping now to the statistics, we may note that the rate of mortality here, as also at Princeton, is slightly less among the foreign missionary alumni, than among the graduates in general. This fact is but what might be expected, considering the care given to the selection of men adapted to the climate of the countries respectively in which they are to spend their days. It is a cause of gratitude to find that nearly one-half of the whole number are yet in the field of labor. Still further, as showing the relative number who have entered on foreign service, we may divide the half century into three periods. In the first, from 1827 to 1843, the whole number of students was 228, and of foreign missionaries 17 —or one in thirteen nearly. From 1844 to 1860, the returns were 523 and 27—or one in nineteen nearly. And from 1861 to 1876, the numbers were 419 and 15—or only one in nearly twenty-eight. This comparative statement furnishes materials for earnest thought, and perhaps for somewhat discouraging inferences. But many things have to be considered before one can reach a conclusion in such matters; and at any rate, I do not wish now to pursue this point.*

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* Some of the friends of missions have favored the appointment of a missionary Professorship or Lectureship, in order to secure greater interest in the cause of missions. A Professorship would give its incumbent a status not to be enjoyed by a Lectureship—a place in the faculty, a permanent chair, and the influence growing out of continued acquaintance. A Lectureship, especially if it contemplated itinerant service, visiting all the Seminaries, delivering some lectures at each, would result practically in a limited range of study and of topics. A Professorship would seem to be preferable to a Lectureship.

Either would have to contend with certain difficulties:

1. The limited time available. Even now it is difficult to secure time for the lectures of all the Professors.

2. A few lectures, all that could be given, would not meet the requirements of the subject. The cause of foreign missions is one of many relations and wide range. It has a home side, with its various theories and its many practical duties. Its foreign department embraces matters of varying interest in every different country, and such as extend from

If we follow the brethren to their various fields of labor, we find that seven of them went to the Indians, of whom only two are now in the field; two went to Africa, both of whom early entered into rest; nineteen went to India, five to Siam, twelve to China, one to Japan, eight to South America, one to Mexico, one to the Jews, and one to Greece, in his purpose, though called to a better country before he left our shores. The General Catalogue does not fill its first page of names without printing several of them in italics. Most of the names on this page were members of churches in the old Synod; so were most of the devoted women who went abroad as the wives of the earlier alumni missionaries. The first two brethren sent as missionaries were not indeed students of this Seminary, for our Missionary Society thus early showed its wide relations to the whole church, but the first two missionaries appointed by the Society were students of this school, and were appointed in January, 1832, several months before any from other Seminaries.

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the corner-stone to the top stone,—preaching, education, training native ministers, translations and all the work of the press, organization of churches and self-support of their ministers. These are subject to modification by peculiarities of race, language, religion &c. No Lecturer for all the Seminaries, no single Professor even for each Seminary, could easily do justice to such a vast and varied work. A lecture on Buddhism, another on Brahmanism, and another on Mohammedanism—all very well in their place—would not begin to fulfill the demands of the case.

3. If some measure of special interest were awakened by a Professor or a Lecturer, it would not only be of narrow range, as just shown, but it would be at the risk of great loss to the cause of missions. The regular Professors would be likely to pass by missionary topics, and leave them to the Missionary Lecturer. The practical result would be such as follow the work of a specialist; the many-sided views of other minds would be seldom given. As the case now stands, each Professor is expected to present the evangelistic features of his chair—thus securing a wide and comprehensive treatment of the subject.

4. Experience seems to show that special lectures on Missions may easily result in failure. On the other hand, see the influence exerted for this cause by Dr. A. Alexander and others, in their usual course of instruction and example.

These are but hints, as are some paragraphs in a paper read before the Alumni of Princeton Theological Seminary a year ago, and also an article on the Training of Missionaries in the *Biblical Repertory* of January, 1867. The subject is one that is worthy of careful study.—*May, 1877.*

Our next step takes us to the work of the missionaries. You see them laboring for Christ among the Indian tribes, in Western Africa, India, Siam, China, Japan, among the Chinese in California, in Brazil, the United States of Colombia, and Mexico. The population of these various countries may be estimated at about 700,000,000, or one-half of the human family, and the greater part of this vast multitude has become accessible to missionaries since this Seminary was founded. The two most densely inhabited countries, India and China, and some of the smallest tribes, are in the missions occupied by these brethren—400,000,000 of the Chinese, and 1000 Omaha Indians; such is the diverse ordering of Providence. We must not despise the few lost sheep in the wilderness, nor be discouraged at the greatness of the harvest in the multitudinous nations of the East. Nor need our missionary brethren hesitate to follow the guidance which takes them into either field. John Newton said that if two angels were sent down from heaven, one to rule a kingdom, the other to sweep the streets of its principal city, they would come with equal pleasure.

If we consider the languages and dialects in use in these nations and tribes, we find over twenty, of which our brethren must learn each at least one—their first occupation, often dry and difficult; but it opens the door to the minds of the people. Some of our brethren abroad stand high in native scholarship. Dr. Newton is, I suppose, the best Gurmukhi scholar living, and to him we are indebted chiefly for the Dictionary of the Gurmukhi language, and for the translations of the Scriptures in it. In other countries many valuable contributions have been made by these missionaries to this department of knowledge.

After learning the language, then follows the life-work of all true missionaries, that of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ to souls depraved, perishing, even dead in trespasses and in sin. This work is one and ever the same, the sacred work of Apostles and of true ministers of the gospel in all ages. Yet, if we would rightly understand it, we must keep in mind its varied forms. In general, it is preaching in meetings of many or few, it is teaching children and youth, it is preparing and printing translations of the Holy Scriptures

and other Christian books, it is training native converts for the work of the ministry among their own people. It is not labor in vain. It results by the blessing of God in souls converted, in churches gathered, in the settlement of native pastors, in the translation of redeemed spirits to the heavenly world—often such as have been purified in the fires of persecution. These greatest results may not in all cases be achieved for many years, but in all cases gospel seed is sown, gospel leaven is implanted, and the time of life from the dead is drawing on apace. No matter how poor, how ignorant, how low down in the scale of humanity, the present generation of the unevangelized are not worse than others who have been lifted up by the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit to eminence in social culture, intelligence, morality, and Christian excellence. Even so shall it be in many Indian tribes, in many dark places of Africa, in all the thronged cities of India and China. It is this work in which our brethren are engaged, and we almost envy them their great privilege of being so employed.

If time permitted we might refer to some of the distinctive aspects of each of the fields in which our brethren are at work, but it is only the briefest reference we can make to them. Here is the Indian missionary work, which from the earliest settlement of these cis-Alleghany regions enlisted the active sympathies and labors of our Christian people. It is now a work to be performed in a critical period of Indian life, and it is somewhat discouraging to find that only two of our alumni are remaining in this service, both of them now aged men. When we turn to another part of the great field, where darkness has long reigned, we are impressed with the fact that but two of our brethren went to Africa, and after a short time of earnest work they both entered there into rest. We mourn over the early departure from this life of John Cloud and George Paull. They were devoted and noble men. We do not believe that they lived and died in vain. Their African graves speak to us, and so does the remembrance of their loving and earnest piety. We may fear that their fervent zeal outran their prudence in meeting climatic risks; but the conditions of African work are now better understood, and life there may be preserved as in

most other countries. We trust our beloved Seminary is yet to have representatives in this field—specially connected as it is with our own country, and having peculiar claims on our Christian sympathy.

As we follow these thoughts, specifying only countries in which some of our alumni met their hour of death, and mentioning by name only those who have thus gone before us, we recall the bright face of Mr. Staicos, who died before he embarked for Greece, his native country. We remember Mr. Samuel Sharpe, who now sleeps in Bogota, a devoted brother, whose promise of most useful service was early disappointed,—rather, we should say, was early fulfilled in the world above. We recall to memory the two brethren who had given their lives to China—Messrs. Orr and Green. All who knew them would bear willing testimony to their being earnest, faithful brethren, men highly esteemed and worthy of being held in honor as ministers and as missionaries. Their good record shows that missionaries, brought back to their native country against their choice, may often be permitted to be very useful in the ministry at home.

It is when we turn to India that we find in our Catalogue the first starred name amongst our foreign missionaries, that of my esteemed class-mate and missionary colleague, William Reed. He was a sincere and good man, devoted to the cause, well fitted by gifts of nature and grace to be a useful and practical laborer; but he had not entered fully on his long-desired work when the failure of his health arrested his progress. Then followed his embarking for this country, under the impression that he might here live for several years; but his voyage ended in his peaceful departure to a better country, and from its resting-place in the Bay of Bengal his glorified form shall rise when the sea gives up its dead. More than twenty years later the terrible rebellion of the Sepoys swept from the earth in a tempest of wicked passion hundreds of foreign residents in India; many of the strong men, many of the best women, many dear little children were cut down by the pitiless insurgents. All our own brethren and their families were for several months in extreme peril, but through the mercy of God all escaped a violent death, many times apparently inevitable, all except-

ing four families, those of Messrs. Freeman, Campbell, Johnson and McMullin. Of these, Messrs. Campbell and Johnson were students of this Seminary. They were choice and devoted laborers, and their wives were like-minded. How was the heart of our whole Church moved to its depths by this great bereavement! Resuming these notices, we next come to the name of Mr. Crane, who went to India under the American Board, but was compelled to return to this country after a few years on account of his health. Here he continued in the work of his Lord until he departed this life in 1856. Speaking of him without personal knowledge, I yet feel persuaded that he was a true and faithful missionary and minister. The next name that rises before us is that of Mr. Fullerton, who died in India in 1865. Few men ever left the Seminary, few men ever served the Saviour as missionaries, who held a higher place in the affections of their brethren. Of fine mental powers, of genial social disposition, of warm affections, all lighted up by a joyous temperament, he was an earnest and whole-hearted servant of Christ, and a most efficient and successful laborer. His letters describing his visit to the ruins of the Futtehgurh missionary station and his interviews with the native Christian brethren after the Sepoy Rebellion, are most graphic and touching. It is a wonder that they have not long since been re-printed, as a volume for our Sabbath-school libraries. As we think of Mr. Fullerton and so many others called away in the midst of their days and of their labors for Christ and their fellow-men, we can only say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight!" The last name on this list of departed brethren is that of Dr. Warren, of whose death at Gwalior, India, we heard but a few days ago. He counted it a privilege to go back to his missionary work, after having been led by Providence to spend several years in the home ministry of the Church. Those who have read his book on India, published by our Board of Publication, will receive a most favorable impression of his ability, which was much above the ordinary grade, of his varied gifts of service, of his genial temperament, and especially of his sincere labor for Christ and his fellow-men. He translated Flavel's Fountain of Life and Hodge's

Way of Life into Hindustani, and prepared other works; but his little memoirs of two native converts, Poor Blind Sally and Jutni, were perhaps more attractive. It was touching indeed to read of Jutni's dying hours—a young Hindu wife and mother borne up above the sorrow of separation from her friends and above the fear of dying. "I know Christ," she said, "and can fully and completely trust Him in all things. He keeps my mind in perfect peace," and so she entered into rest. Her missionary friend has now met her again in the Saviour's presence.

Here we might close these brief notices of departed missionaries, who went forth from this school of the prophets. Of those still living in various missionary countries, we forbear to speak, though their record is one that we need not be ashamed of,—rather it is in general one that is worthy of our admiration. But it may be allowed, and our best feelings prompt us all, I feel sure, to pay a brief tribute to the memory of the Christian women who went forth as missionaries, and who have finished their course. We find the names of eleven of these elect ladies, the wives of missionaries from this Seminary, most of them born and brought up in the churches of this region. We have called to remembrance their history, their character, even their looks as we have seen them going out to their distant fields, and some of them as they returned to end their days here at home. We would use no indiscriminate language of praise; they had their different gifts, their varied culture, their diversified range of social enjoyment; and they would all have themselves confessed imperfections which their friends seldom saw; but take them as they were, and I think they were a noble company of Christian women, and as missionaries they were worthy of all honor and love. The Church may well thank God for the grace given to them. This Seminary may point to them as invaluable co-laborers with its alumni abroad. Their husbands will surely praise them. To one of these for more than forty years the memory of his departed wife has been a benediction, and a cherished incentive to continued labor in the cause of missions. For this cause may we ever have the service of consecrated, spiritually-minded Christian women,—adorned with the gifts of education and refined culture, but most of

all with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price!

We have thus glanced at the beginning and the progress of the foreign missionary cause as connected with this Theological Seminary. Imperfect as this sketch has been, it has yet given us some impression of the grace of God as displayed in the ordering of events, in the piety of his people, and in the lives and labors of many of his servants. We are filled with gratitude for what God hath wrought for the Church and for the world in connection with this Theological Seminary. And we are led to indulge high hopes of future and wide-spread usefulness from these Old Synod of Pittsburgh churches and from this School of ministerial training, always chiefly supported by their men and means. We are brought back, therefore, to the old Synod, its churches, its families, its sons and its daughters, and in their piety we see one of the greatest means which God in his grace has appointed for the conversion of the world. Here in this home of Presbyterianism, amongst a people homogeneous, earnest, trained in Christian doctrine and experience; here in this goodly land of hills and valleys, of forests and fields, of wealth in the soil and treasures in the bosom of the earth, what may not this school of the prophets do, what may not this cause of missions do, if only the spirit of the fathers rest upon their children? We are grateful for the past. We are hopeful for the future. At the end of the next fifty years, I trust, not scores but hundreds of foreign missionaries will be counted as alumni. We must look for a great increase of laborers abroad. The home field must be thoroughly cultivated, but it is filling up with laborers. The work in foreign fields is only begun. In China alone all the alumni of this Seminary might find plenty of work to do for Christ and for souls. What we most need is the outpouring of the Spirit from on high upon our churches, our Seminaries, and our own souls. "God be merciful unto us and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us. Selah. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. . . . God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him."